

### 15. BROWN CRAKE *AMAURORNIS AKOOL* SYKES FEEDING ON THE EGGS OF THE LARGE PIED WAGTAIL *MOTACILLA MADERASPATENSIS* GMELIN

While I was studying the breeding biology of the large pied wagtail *Motacilla maderaspatensis* Gmelin on March 29, 1993, a pair of brown crakes (*Amaurornis akool*) raided the nest of the wagtail, located in a clump of polygonum (*Polygonum glabrum*) about 3 m from the banks of the river Mutha, Pune, Maharashtra. When I saw the crakes perched on a rocky islet, I hid in the green belt of plants, especially the evergreen karanj tree (*Pongamia glabra*). The breeding pair of wagtails immediately noticed the crakes, and without losing a second they started dive-bombing attacks. The crakes seemed to be indifferent, they did not move. One of the birds stretched its neck and uttered "a longdrawn vibrating whistle" (Ali and Ripley, HANDBOOK vol. 2: 168) This call can be described as "Tir r r r r r r r r r ...". It was not only clearly audible to me, but anyone in the vicinity of the river could have easily heard it. This call served as a kind of signal to another bird, which was slightly larger. The larger crake dashed into the Polygonum bush and raided the nest. By pecking forcefully at the eggs, the crake

broke them open and gulped down the white and the yolk as quickly as possible. The wagtails did not keep quiet while their nest was being robbed. They kept fluttering and hovering restlessly around the bush. The nest was completely destroyed within three minutes. The crakes flew off and disappeared into the bushes bordering the water. The wagtails chased them off frantically, but could not make physical contact. After having returned to the nest, the wagtails remained silent for about 5 minutes. The male perched on the polygonum bush made the first move, climbed down and walked up to the nest. Both the male and the female wagtail fed on the remains of the eggs. They also picked up the eggshells and disposed of them a few metres away from the nest.

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KIRAN PURANDARE

62/A, 'Prashant'

Erandwane Gaonthan,

Off Karve Road, Pune 411 004,

Maharashtra,

India.

### 16. STATUS OF THE PURPLE-RUMPED SUNBIRD *NECTARINIA ZEYLONICA* IN GUJARAT STATE

The purple-rumped sunbird *Nectarinia zeylonica* (Linn.) is known to occur in peninsular India, south of a line from Nasik (northwest Maharashtra), Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh (Ripley 1982, Ali and Ripley 1983, Grimmett *et al.* 1998). Ali (1955) during his avifaunal survey of Gujarat State had only a single sight record of this species from Pavagadh, Panchmahal district on October 30, 1944.

At least three other publications show that the species occurs definitely in the Rajpipla forest along the River Narmada (Monga and Naoroji 1983, Desai *et al.* 1993, Narve *et al.* 1997). In

spite of this, only a single sighting is recorded by Grimmett *et al.* (1998).

We have been observing this species throughout the year at Vadodara (22° 00' N, 73° 16' E) and Anand (22° 32' N, 73° 00' E). It also breeds at both the places. One of us (Raju Vyas) located one nest on a bougainvillea plant during March-April 1986 at Sayajibaug Zoo Garden, Vadodara. Shri Fatehsinh Jasol photographed the nesting pair. At Anand, we observed a female feeding her two fledglings on June 30, 1995. We also observed breeding at Nadiad (22° 41' N, 72° 55' E) and Pariej (22° 33' N, 72° 38' E) in Kheda

district, Gujarat. At Surat (21° 12' N, 72° 52' E), it is a common breeding species (Bakul Trivedi, Snehal Patel, Mukesh Bhatt, *pers. comm.*) Sightings at Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar during 1998 by Shri Lavkumar Khacher and Shri Lalsinh Raol (Raol 1999) indicate its western distributional limit in Gujarat.

It can be concluded that the purple-rumped sunbird *Nectarinia zeylonica* is an uncommon resident of Gujarat State, and occurs in Surat district, Shoolpaneswar Wildlife Sanctuary (Bharuch district) as well as Vadodara, Kheda,

Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar districts. Sálím Ali's remark (Ali 1955) that 'it seems curious that the species should be so rare in Gujarat' is clarified now.

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B.M. PARASHARYA  
AINP on Agricultural Ornithology  
Gujarat Agricultural University,  
Anand 388 110, Gujarat, India.

RAJU VYAS  
Sayaji Baug Zoo Garden,  
Vadodara 390 018, Gujarat, India.

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## 17. A SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE ON THE AVIFAUNA OF THE THAR DESERT (RAJASTHAN)

While birdwatching in the Thar desert between December 1985 and September 1999, I made extensive notes on the birds I encountered. It was, however, not until the publication of an annotated checklist of the birds of the Thar desert of Rajasthan (Rahmani 1997) which summarises the bird records of three surveys between February 1993 and May 1994, that I felt the need to publish my own sightings. Based on my experience in the area, I realised that the above mentioned checklist was not comprehensive. The purpose of this paper is to update Rahmani's list with additional records. Details of all records, both published and unpublished, are given for uncommon and rare species, while for those more frequent, only status and distribution are given.

### SYSTEMATIC LIST

Sixty-two species are listed below. The species' status in the Thar desert of Rajasthan is given in brackets as follows: R Resident; PR Presumably Resident; W Winter Visitor; S Summer Visitor; M Monsoon Visitor; PM Passage Migrant; V Vagrant; and (?) Status uncertain. Some of these are provisional, to be regarded as a general guide rather than a definitive statement. Common and scientific names are based on Manakadan and Pittie (2001).

**Great crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus*** (W): Recorded in the eastern part of the desert where there are suitable wetlands. A party of 22 was seen at Kharda, Pali district on January 5, 1989. Two were seen at Sardarsamand, Pali district on the same day.